

## **COMBINATION MEAL SERVING TRAY**

### **Related Applications**

The present invention claims priority on provisional patent application, Serial No. 60/498,029, filed on August 27, 2003, entitled "Nacho Tray".

### **Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates generally to the field of meal trays and more particularly to a combination meal serving tray.

### **Background of the Invention**

Concession stands at sports and event arenas sell a variety of food and drink items. Commonly if a buyer purchases food such as nachos and a drink they have to carry both a nacho tray and the drink. This can be juggling act and result in spilled drinks. When they get back to their seat, they often place the tray on the floor where it is exposed to dirt and other contaminates. In addition, the tray may be stepped on or kicked by other spectators moving to and from their seats. If the user attempts to place the food tray on their lap then they have to place their drink on the ground.

There exist cardboard food and drink trays, however they still sit on the ground. In addition, the drink holder can only be used to transport the drink cup because the fit is either too snug or too loose.

Thus there exists a need for an improved combination meal tray that over comes these and other problems.

## Summary of Invention

A combination meal serving tray that over comes these problems has a substantially pear shaped housing with a pair of legs. A food well is formed in the housing. A cup well is formed in the housing and acts as a third leg to hold the tray off the ground. The cup well may have a number of structural ribs. In one embodiment, the cup well has a number of compressible ribs.

In one embodiment, the food well has an arch in a bottom of the food well. The food well may have a cutout at an end of the arch. The food well may also have a lip along a top edge. The tray may also have a lid that fits over the lip. The food well may have a primary well and a secondary well.

In one embodiment, the lid has a depression that fits over the secondary well to form a liquid tight seal.

In one embodiment, a combination meal serving tray includes a pear shaped housing having a pair of legs. A drink well is formed in the housing opposite the pair legs and forms a third leg. A first food well is formed in the housing and has an arm impression formed in a bottom of the first food well. A second food well is also formed in the housing. In one embodiment, a lid fits over the first food well. The lid may also fit over the second food well. The first food well and the second food well may have a perimeter lip for engaging the lid.

In one embodiment, the tray can be nested with similar trays.

In one embodiment, a combination meal serving tray has a housing with a pair legs. An opening is formed between the pair of legs. A drink well is formed in the housing and has a number of compressible ribs. A food well is formed in the housing. In one embodiment, there is a cutout area between the drink well and the pair legs. The tray is designed to be nested vertically. The tray is also designed to be nested horizontally. The tray may be disposable. In one embodiment, the tray is formed of plastic and the compressible ribs have a thickness that is less than a rest of the housing.

### Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a top right perspective view of a combination meal serving tray in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a top right perspective view of a combination meal serving tray with a lid in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 3 is bottom left perspective view of a combination meal serving tray in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 is a left end view of a combination meal serving tray in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 5 is a top view of a combination meal serving tray in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 6 is a view of vertically stacked combination meal serving trays in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 7 is a top view of horizontally stacked combination meal serving trays in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 8 is a top right perspective of vertically stacked combination meal serving trays with lids in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

## Detailed Description of the Drawings

A combination meal serving tray has a pair of legs and cup holder to keep the tray off the ground. The shape of the legs and the cup holder allow the user to hold the tray by the cup holder and rest the tray on their forearm. This makes it easy to carry and hold with one hand. In addition, the spacing between the legs and cup tray is setup so that it fits across a thigh of the user.

FIG. 1 is a top right perspective view of a combination meal serving tray 10 accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The combination meal serving tray 10 has a pair shaped housing 12 along the top perimeter. The housing 12 has a pair of legs 14. The housing 12 also has a cup well 16 at a first end. A food well 18 is formed in the second end of the housing 12. The food well 18 may includes a second well 20. The spacing 22 between the pair of legs 14 and the cup well 16 is about the size of a human thigh. This allows a user to balance the tray on their thigh.

The cup well 16 has a plurality of structural ribs 24 along a top or upper portion of the cup well 16. The lower section of the cup well 16 has a plurality of compressible ribs 26. The structural ribs 24 provide structural support for the cup well 16 since the cup well 16 acts as the third leg of the tray 10. The compressible ribs 26 allow the cup well 16 to snugly hold a variety of different cup sizes without holding the cup to tight. The compressible ribs 26 are formed of a thinner plastic material than the rest of the housing 10.

FIG. 2 is a top right perspective view of a combination meal serving tray 10 with a lid 28 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The lid 28 fits over the first food well and the second food well. The lid 28 fits over a lip 30 (more easily seen in FIG. 1) that is along the perimeter of the food well. The lid 28 has a depression 32 that forms a liquid tight seal over the second food well 20. This allows the second food well to hold liquid cheese or a dipping sauce without spilling into the drink well 16 or the primary food well 18.

FIG. 3 is bottom left perspective view of a combination meal serving tray 10 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. This view shows the

opening 34 between the pair of legs 14. The opening 34 has an arch shape and is aligned with an arch 36 in a bottom of the food well 18. At one end of the arch 36 is a cutout 38. A user may grab the cup well 16 and have the arch 36 of the tray 10 rest on their forearm. The cutout 38 provides space for the user's hand.

FIG. 4 is a left end view of a combination meal serving tray 10 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. This view shows arch 36 in the food well 18 and the opening 34 between the legs 14. This feature allows the user to easily carry the tray 10 using a single hand. In addition, the two legs and cup well hold the tray 10 off the ground.

FIG. 5 is a top view of a combination meal serving tray 10 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. This view shows how the compressible ribs 26 are used to hold a cup in the cup well. The housing 10 is made in a single piece of plastic in one embodiment. The lid 28 is a separate part. The compressible ribs 26 are less sturdy than the rest of the housing 10. This allows them to easily compress when a cup is inserted. In addition, this and the plastic make it easy to remove the drink from the cup well 16 when the user wants a drink. The tray 10 is disposable in one embodiment.

FIG. 6 is a view of vertically stacked combination meal serving trays in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The view shows six trays 10 nested vertically. This shows that the trays 10 can be efficiently stacked for storage.

FIG. 7 is a top view of horizontally stacked combination meal serving trays in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The pair shape of the trays 10 allow them to efficiently laid out horizontally on a serving or preparation table or for shipping in a container.

FIG. 8 is a top right perspective of vertically stacked combination meal serving trays with lids in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. This view shows how the trays 10 nest vertically even with their lids 28 on. This allows the trays 10 to be filled or prepared with food and then stacked vertically to await a drink or heating.

Thus there has been described a combination meal serving tray that is

easy to carry, keeps the food off the ground, and can be efficiently nested horizontally and vertically.

While the invention has been described in conjunction with specific embodiments thereof, it is evident that many alterations, modifications, and variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the foregoing description. Accordingly, it is intended to embrace all such alterations, modifications, and variations in the appended claims.